

# Boy Kept Deathbed Promise Made Life One of Excellence

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the fifth in a series of articles on the life of lawyer-soldier-statesman Albert Gallatin Jenkins. Readers are invited to supply additional material for eventual inclusion in a biographical volume on General Jenkins.)

By CONGRESSMAN KEN  
HECHLER

Long before the city of Huntington had ever been heard of, the town of Guyandotte, founded in 1809, was thriving. In the pre-Civil War days, when Marshall University was a four-room preparatory school known as Marshall Academy, Albert Gallatin Jenkins laid the foundations at Marshall for a brilliant academic career. Marshall was located on the current site of Huntington, then known as "Holderby's Landing."

There was a restless determination which drove young Albert, and spurred him on to achieve excellence in every field to which he turned a hand. Like his seafaring father, Captain William Jenkins, Albert refused to be fenced in physically or intellectually.

Perhaps a personal reason also motivated young Albert to accept nothing less than the best. His father was 47 when he married Janetta Grigsby McNutt, a beautiful belle of 20 who withstood the rigors of mountain travel by wagon.

Mrs. Jenkins raised three fine sons and a daughter and maintained an active social life at the Greenbottom Homestead in ante-bellum days. Whereas Captain Jenkins set a high example of entrepreneurial accomplishment, and amassed vast wealth through river trade, Mother Janetta instilled in her boys all the social virtues and

the keys to professional as well as financial success. She wanted her boys to help humanity and be of service to their nation and the growing Ohio Valley.

## Mother's Death Bitter Blow

Then came a bitter blow for young Albert when he was only 12 years old. In the cold winter of 1842, the sensitive and idealistic mother became ill with consumption. The best of care could not save her. On her death bed, Albert pledged that he would live the kind of life of which his mother would be proud. His mother died on April 29, 1843, when she was only 30 years of age.

Captain Jenkins helped lay his wife to rest on a shaded hill at Greenbottom. The doughty old sea captain was already 68 years of age when Janetta passed away, but he too resolved that he would sacrifice to serve her memory. He was determined to do everything necessary to insure a good education for his children.

After graduating from Marshall Academy, all three of the Jenkins brothers decided to enroll at Jefferson College in Canonsburg, Pa. The college now known as Washington & Jefferson College was located 40 miles from Wheeling and 7 miles from Pittsburgh on the Ohio River.

The three brothers lived together at Brown's Boarding House. The college catalog noted, as most catalogs confidently do: "Few places can be found where the health and habits of youth would be more likely to be safe, or where they would more probably escape the evils and dangers incident to the loss of parental supervision, and to a college life, than in this retired and peaceful village, planted in the heart of a population remarkable for its religious character."

## Extremely Versatile

In view of the tremendous success which Albert Gallatin Jenkins achieved in every line of endeavor he attempted — and he was extremely versatile — it is interesting to note the subjects which he studied at Jefferson College in the Class of 1848. Today, a liberal education is on trial, and the constant pounding and pressure which educators receive to train more students "vocationally" has raised some doubts about Latin, Greek, mathematics and history and the degree of emphasis accorded them. The course of study which Albert Gallatin Jenkins followed would horrify contemporaries who might ask "What can he do?" after his graduation, but Jenkins not only survived the course of study but proved he could become a top-notch lawyer, legislator and military strategist. Here are some of the classes he was required to take:

Freshman First Term: Livy,

Roman Antiquities, Latin Grammar, Herodotus, Greek Grammar, Algebra.

**Sophomore First Term:** Tacitus' History; Latin Composition; Xenophanes' continuation of Thucydides; Spherical Trigonometry. "This class is examined every Sabbath Day on a portion of the Greek Testament; and its members take their turn in public declamation."

**Junior First Term:** Horace, Satires and Epistles; Demosthenes' Orations; Nautical Astronomy; Natural Philosophy; Rhetoric; Conic Sections.

**Senior Second Term:** Tacitus de Moribus Germaniae and Agricola; Meteorology, Geology and Mineralogy; Moral and Political Philosophy; English Composition.

In further commentary on the nature of Jefferson College, the catalog of 1847 states: "The friends and patrons of this Institution consider it the chief glory of it that it was founded in prayer and faith; and that God has as signally owned the efforts made here to promote true religion as those to advance sound learning. All the officers of it consider it one of their highest duties to promote the moral and religious improvement of the pupils."

Albert Gallatin Jenkins was an active student at Jefferson College, participating in the literary society activities and taking a very active role in the founding of Phi Gamma Delta fraternity. The Phi Gams honor Jenkins as the eleventh member of the first chapter of their fraternity, and his name was

found engraved along with that of the first member, and a close friend of Jenkins, John Templeton McCarty.

#### Then Third In Size

It is interesting that Jefferson College in the year of Jenkins' graduation, 1848, ranked third in size among its contemporaries. Harvard had 273 men and 11 professors; Princeton 257 men and 14 professors; while Jefferson had 207 students and 10 professors.

When Albert Gallatin Jenkins with his two older brothers were graduated from Jefferson College, the commencement exercises were held on June 14, 1848. Significantly, it was the youngest brother who, not yet 18 years of age on his graduation day, was called upon to deliver one of the commencement orations. Unfortunately, the text of his remarks are not available. But we do know from an old Commencement Program that the title of Albert's address was: "The Mystery of Nature."

An old letter of the first member of Phi Gamma Delta, John Templeton McCarty, reveals these lines: "I will now give you a hasty history of myself. After we left Wheeling, nothing of interest occurred till we reached the residence of Gallatin Jenkins. I shook him warmly by the hand and expressed many wishes for his future glory, and then said Vale, Vale, utrumque vale!"

Whatever McCarty intended to convey in his Latin message to his classmate in graduation year, it had one definite effect: it resolved Jenkins to enroll the following fall in the New Frontier of the Harvard Law School.

(To Be Continued)